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SYLLOGE ON WEST ASIA

**FOCUS, NUCLEAR, MISSILES & OTHER
SECURITY ISSUES IN WEST ASIA**

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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

IRAN

General Nasirzadeh says Iran capable of building jet engine

Tehran Times, 28th February, 2021

Some universities in Iran ask the Air Force to build a piece of jet engine “while today some of our university workshops can build different generations of jet engines,” he explained. He added, “One of our demands is that education officials increase the hours of workshop training. Our universities provide basic training, and we will use capable officers who will increase our military and national strength in accordance with our training programs as in the past.” He also said, “The country’s Air Force has operational dominance over the region.”

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/458621/General-Nasirzadeh-says-Iran-capable-of-building-jet-engine>

Iran rules out talks with US, EU to discuss nuclear deal revival

Aljazeera, 28th February, 2021

Iran has ruled out holding an informal meeting with the United States and European countries to discuss ways to revive its 2015 nuclear deal with major powers, insisting that Washington must first lift all its unilateral sanctions. “Considering the recent actions and statements by the United States and three European powers, Iran does not consider this the time to hold an informal meeting with these countries, which was proposed by the EU foreign policy chief,” foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Sunday, according to Iranian media. The US in response said it was “disappointed” but remained “ready to reengage in meaningful diplomacy to achieve a mutual return to compliance with JCPOA commitments,” a White House spokeswoman said

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/28/iran-says-time-not-suitable-for-nuclear-deal-talks>

Armed Forces receive overhauled aircraft

Tehran Times, 2nd March, 2021

In a ceremony attended by Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami, 9 military planes, 10 helicopters, and dozens of engines overhauled in the Aviation Industry Organization run by the Ministry of Defense, were delivered to the Armed Forces on Monday.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/458688/Armed-Forces-receive-overhauled-aircraft>

Macron asks Iran for ‘clear gestures’ on nuclear inspections

Aljazeera, 2nd March, 2021

French President Emmanuel Macron has asked his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rouhani, for “clear gestures” and an immediate return of Tehran to the terms of its nuclear deal with world powers, according to his office. “Having reminded [Rouhani] of the efforts made by France with its partners in the last years to reach a negotiated solution, the [French] head of state stressed it was important that Iran made clear and immediate gestures so that dialogue can resume with all parties to the Vienna deal,” the statement said.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/2/macron-asks-iran-for-clear-gestures-on-nuclear-inspections>

Western powers drop censure plan as Iran agrees to IAEA talks

Aljazeera, 4th March, 2021

Western powers have backed off from an effort to censure Iran at the global nuclear watchdog as Iran agreed to cooperate with international experts regarding uranium particles found at several of its sites. Iran’s foreign ministry credited “intense diplomatic efforts” by Tehran and all other participants to its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers for stopping a European and American-backed resolution at the Board of

Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/4/western-censure-cancelled-as-iran-agrees-on-more-iaea-talks>

US sends B-52 bombers back to Middle East amid attacks by Iran-linked proxies

Al-Monitor, 8th March, 2021

The Stratofortress bombers took off from Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota before linking up with aircraft from the Israeli, Saudi and Qatari air forces at different stages of the flight to “deter aggression and reassure [US] partners and allies” in the region, according to US Central Command (CENTCOM). The round-trip sortie is the fourth this year, a sign of tactical continuity between the Trump and Biden administrations as both have sought to dissuade Tehran and its proxies from carrying out attacks in the region.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2021/03/iran-b52-bomber-pentagon-attack-saudi.html#ixzz6p7FKFUIB>

Iran to unveil hovercraft in next calendar year

Tehran Times, 8th March, 2021

Addressing a meeting of Navy commanders, Khanzadi noted the first hovercraft made in Iran will join the Navy’s fleet in the next Iranian year, which will begin on March 21, Tasnim reported. Pointing to the Navy’s self-sufficiency in the maintenance and repair of military vessels and sub-surface watercraft, the commander stressed, “The Navy has brought glory to the Armed Forces by unveiling Makran forward base ship and the Zereh (Armor) missile-launching frigate.”

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/458931/Iran-to-unveil-hovercraft-in-next-calendar-year>

IAEA confirms Iran starts enriching uranium with third cascade of IR-2m machines at Natanz

Tehran Times, 9th March, 2021

“On 7 March 2021, the Agency verified ... that: Iran had begun feeding natural UF₆ into the third cascade of 174 IR-2m centrifuges,” the UN nuclear agency announced in a Monday report obtained by Reuters, referring to uranium hexafluoride, the feedstock for centrifuges. “The fourth cascade of 174 IR-2m centrifuges was installed but had yet to be fed with natural UF₆; installation of a fifth cascade of IR-2m centrifuges was ongoing; and installation of a sixth cascade of IR-2m centrifuges had yet to begin,” it stated. Iran’s representative to the Vienna-based organizations said in February that the country had installed new cascades of advanced centrifuges at two nuclear sites in Natanz and Fordow to increase enrichment capacity.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/458971/IAEA-confirms-Iran-starts-enriching-uranium-with-third-cascade>

US will not relieve sanctions on Iran before nuclear deal terms are respected

Middle East Monitor, 13th March, 2021

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has asserted that his country will not relieve sanctions imposed on Iran before complying with the terms agreed under the 2015 nuclear deal, news agencies reported on Thursday. During a hearing before the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Blinken stated: “I think the ball is in their court to see if they're serious about engaging or not.” Blinken shared that the US had accepted the European proposal to mediate talks with Iran, but Tehran said the timing was not right and called first for the removal of sanctions. “We said we would attend,” Blinken told the committee. “Iran so far has said no,” he added.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210313-us-will-not-relieve-sanctions-on-iran-before-nuclear-deal-terms-are-respected/>

IRAQ

Multiple rockets land at Iraq's Ain al-Asad airbase: Officials

Aljazeera, 3rd March, 2021

At least 10 rockets have landed at Ain al-Asad airbase in the western Iraqi province of Anbar, according to the Iraqi military and the US-led coalition forces.

The rockets struck the airbase, which hosts US, coalition and Iraqi forces, at 7:20am local time (04:20 GMT), Colonel Wayne Marotto, spokesman for the US-led coalition forces in the country, said on Wednesday on Twitter. The attack caused no significant losses, Iraqi's military said without going into further detail. A Baghdad Operations Command official told Reuters news agency earlier that about 13 rockets were launched from a location about 8km (5 miles) from the base, which is in western Anbar province.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/3/multiple-rockets-land-at-iraqs-ain-al-asad-air-base-reports>

ISRAEL

Israeli-owned cargo ship rocked by explosion in Gulf of Oman

Al-Monitor, 26th February, 2021

An Israeli-owned cargo ship suffered at least one explosion while sailing in the Gulf of Oman on Friday in the latest such maritime incident in the Middle East.

The vessel, the MV Helios Ray, quickly turned around and headed for port around 1 a.m. morning after departing from Dammam, Saudi Arabia, and sailing through the Strait of

Hormuz. The crew reported no injuries and the vessel continues to sail back toward the strait, according to an open-source maritime tracking website. The ship is owned by the Tel Aviv-based Ray Shipping company, whose head, Rami Ungar, has ties to Mossad chief Yossi Cohen, Israel's Kan broadcaster reported, without naming sources.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2021/02/israel-cargo-ship-explosion-gulf.html#ixzz6p7DGPmNi>

Israel, Arab countries mull establishing 'regional defence alliance'

Middle East Monitor, 4th March, 2021

Israel is currently in contact with Western countries to establish a regional defence alliance with the participation of several Arab countries, against the "Iranian threat". local Makan reported yesterday.

"Israeli officials' contact with their Arab counterparts increased in recent days," the newspaper quotes official sources as saying. It added that talks included a recent call between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Crown Prince of Bahrain Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa as well as a meeting between Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz and Jordan's King Abdullah II. In August last year it was [reported](#) that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel were working on a plan to establish a spy base in the Yemeni Island of Socotra, according to *JForum*, the official sites of the Jewish and French-speaking community.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210304-israel-arab-countries-mull-establishing-regional-defence-alliance/>

Gantz says Israel has list of Iran-backed targets ready to strike

Aljazeera, 5th March, 2021

Israel's defence minister has said that his country has drawn up plans to strike Iranian

targets if Tehran shows signs of nuclear escalation. Benny Gantz told Fox News that Israel is still working on its plans, but “we have them in our hands of course”. He showed a map of Lebanon that he said includes ground forces, missiles and launching sites set up by Iranian proxy forces along the border.

“This is a target map. Each one of them has been checked legally, operationally, intelligence-wise and we are ready to fight,” Gantz said.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/5/gantz-z-says-israel-has-list-of-iran-backed-targets-ready-to-strike>

US, Israel hold talks on Iran nuclear diplomacy, security threats

Aljazeera, 11th March, 2021

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and his Israeli counterpart, Meir Ben-Shabbat, took part in the first US-Israel bilateral security meeting since President Joe Biden took office in January. “It’s vital to the president, to the administration that as we are looking ahead to approaching diplomacy and moving toward a diplomatic track to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon” that Israel be briefed on the plans, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/11/xx-hold-us-israel-meeting-thursday>

Israel, Greece, Cyprus hold naval drill amid deepening ties

Aljazeera, 12th March, 2021

The Israeli military says it has conducted a joint naval exercise with Greece and Cyprus, in the latest sign of increased cooperation among three countries that increasingly view Turkey as a rival in the Mediterranean Sea. It said the Noble Dina exercise, which was led by Israel and also included France, covered “anti-submarine procedures, search and rescue scenarios, and a scenario simulating battle between ships”. The exercise was concluded on Thursday. Israel,

Greece and Cyprus have taken several steps in recent months to cement ties, including advancing plans to build a 2,000-megawatt undersea electricity cable and a 1,900km (1,300-mile) undersea gas pipeline.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/12/israel-greece-cyprus-hold-naval-drill-amid-deepening-ties>

Israel unveils the 'Iron Sting' laser, GPS-guided mortar munition

The Jerusalem Post, 14th March, 2021

the Defense Ministry, the IDF’s Ground Forces and Elbit Systems have revealed a precise, laser and GPS guided mortar munition: the “Iron Sting.” The 120 mm mortar has recently undergone final trials in a testing site in southern Israel. The completion of testing enables the start of serial production ahead of the system’s supply to the IDF, the Defense Ministry said in a statement on Sunday. The body in charge of development of the system in the Defense Ministry is the Directorate of Defense R&D (DDR&D). The series of tests was carried out using two networked “Cardom” mortar systems developed by Elbit: a “Cardom” system, mounted on an M113 APC and a “Cardom Spear” system, mounted on a Hummer 4X4 SUV.

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/elbit-defense-ministry-reveal-laser-gps-guided-mortar-munition-661959>

SAUDI ARABIA

Biden team considering halting some arms sales for Saudis: Report

Aljazeera, 26th February, 2021

President Joe Biden’s administration is considering the cancellation of arms deals with Saudi Arabia that pose human rights concerns while limiting future military sales to “defensive” weapons, as it reassesses its relationship with the kingdom. Four sources

familiar with the administration's thinking said that after pausing half a billion dollars in arms deals with Saudi Arabia out of concern over casualties in Yemen earlier this year, officials are assessing the equipment and training included in recent sales to determine what can be considered defensive. Those deals would be allowed. A State Department spokesperson said, "Our focus is on ending the conflict in Yemen even as we ensure Saudi Arabia has everything it needs to defend its territory and its people," adding Biden has pledged to end US military support for the military campaign against the Houthis.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/26/biden-team-considering-halting-some-arms-sales-for-saudis-report>

Drone attack on Saudi royal palace launched from Iraq

Middle East Monitor, 27th February, 2021

A Senior Iran-backed militia official in Baghdad has revealed that the January drone attack on the Saudi royal palace was launched from Iraq, *Associated Press (AP)* reported. On Thursday, the militia official told *AP* that three drones were launched from Iraqi-Saudi border areas by a relatively unknown Iran-backed faction in Iraq, and crashed into Riyadh's royal complex on 23 January. The comments by the senior Iraqi militia official mark the first time an Iran-backed group has acknowledged that Iraq was the origin of the attack.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210227-drone-attack-on-saudi-royal-palace-launched-from-iraq/>

Saudi Arabia 'intercepts ballistic missile over Riyadh'

Aljazeera, 28th February, 2021

Multiple explosions were heard and the night skies above Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, lit up with bright flashes on Saturday as a Saudi-led military coalition announced the thwarting of a missile attack that it blamed on Yemen's

Houthi rebels. Brigadier General Turki al-Malki, a spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, said in a statement the Houthis launched a ballistic missile towards Riyadh and three booby-trapped drones towards the province of Jizan, with a fourth towards the southwestern city of Khamis Mushait.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/28/saudi-arabia-intercepts-ballistic-missile-attack-over-riyadh>

Saudi-led coalition intercepts several Houthi drones

Aljazeera, 7th March, 2021

The Saudi-led coalition engaged in Yemen said on Sunday it had destroyed 10 armed drones launched by the Houthi movement, including at least five fired towards Saudi Arabia, state television channels reported.

The coalition did not specify locations in the kingdom but said the drones were aimed at "civilian sites". On Saturday, the coalition said it intercepted seven drones over 24 hours launched towards Khamis Mushait and one towards Jazan, both in southern Saudi Arabia.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/7/saudi-led-coalition-intercepts-several-houthi-drones>

Houthis fire missiles, drones at Saudi oil facilities

Aljazeera, 7th March, 2021

Yemen's Houthi rebels fired drones and missiles at the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry on Sunday, attacking a Saudi Aramco facility at Ras Tanura in an assault the kingdom said was aimed at the security and stability of the global energy supply.

Announcing the attacks, the Houthis also said they attacked military targets in the Saudi cities of Dammam, Asir and Jazan. The Saudi energy ministry said an oil storage yard at Ras Tanura, the site of an oil refinery and the world's biggest offshore oil loading facility, was attacked with

a drone but there were no casualties or property loss.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/7/blast-heard-in-saudi-arabias-dhahran-reports>

SYRIA

US attacks 'Iranian-backed military infrastructure' in Syria

Aljazeera, 26th February, 2021

The United States military says it carried out attacks on facilities in eastern Syria used by Iran-backed militia on Thursday, following recent rocket attacks on US troop locations in Iraq. "At President Biden's direction, US military forces earlier this evening conducted airstrikes against infrastructure utilized by Iranian-backed militant groups in eastern Syria," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby in a statement. According to the Pentagon, US fighter jets dropped seven 500-lb Joint Direct Attack Munition-guided precision bombs, hitting seven targets, which includes a crossing used by the armed groups to move weapons across the border. Kirby said the strikes destroyed multiple facilities at a border control point used by a number of Iranian-backed militant groups, including Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/26/us-strikes-iranian-backed-military-infrastructure-in-syria>

Syria reports new Israeli airstrikes following explosion on Israeli ship in the Gulf

Al-Monitor, 1st March, 2021

Syria reported Israeli airstrikes in the country on Sunday. The strike may have been in retaliation for an attack on an Israeli ship in the Gulf and followed US airstrikes in Syria. The Syrian state-run SANA news outlet reported "Israeli missile aggression" targeted "posts" late Sunday night near Damascus. SANA claimed that Syrian air defenses intercepted most of the

missiles, which came from the Golan Heights. Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the United Nations Monday to condemn the suspected Israeli airstrikes. Israel's public broadcaster Kan reported that the missiles were fired at Iranian targets in response to the apparent attack on an Israeli ship in the Gulf of Oman.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2021/03/israel-airstrikes-damascus-syria-iran-gulf-oman-ship-iran.html#ixzz6p9wBvYM9>

Missile strikes hit oil refineries in northern Syria, killing one

Aljazeera, 5th March, 2021

A series of missile attacks near oil facilities ignited major blazes in northern Syria near the Turkish border and killed one person on Friday. Explosions rocked oil refineries near the towns of al-Bab and Jarablus and set off large fires, Turkey's state-owned Anadolu news agency reported. A source in the Turkish military, which controls swaths of northwest Syria where Turkish troops have a presence, said missile attacks had caused the blasts, which also wounded 11 people. Anadolu said they were ballistic missiles and it was not clear who carried out the attacks.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/5/missile-strikes-hit-oil-refineries-in-north-syria-killing-one>

TURKEY

Turkey's nuclear power dilemma

Aljazeera, 10th March, 2021

Turkish and Russian officials laid the foundation for the third reactor of Turkey's first nuclear power plant Akkuyu in the southern coastal city of Mersin on Wednesday. The plant's first reactor unit is expected to be operational in 2023, the centenary of the Turkish Republic, and the remaining units in

2026. The project is owned by the Russian energy company Rosatom while the Turkish Akkuyu is the license owner and the local operator.

Once completed, the plant is expected to produce 35 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity annually, about 10 percent of Turkey's total electricity supply. The service life will last 50 years.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/10/turkeys-nuclear-dilemma>

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Emirati and Israeli companies pledge to work together on anti-drone technology

Al-Monitor, 11th March, 2021

A United Arab Emirates state-owned arms maker announced an agreement to develop anti-drone technology with an Israeli state company on Thursday. EDGE signed a memorandum of understanding with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) to develop a Counter-Unmanned Aircraft System for the Emirati market. Memorandums of understanding express will and precede a legal agreement. EDGE provides advanced weapons to the UAE's military.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2021/03/edge-uae-israel-aerospace-industries-counter-anti-drone.html#ixzz6p9fgUfGw>

YEMEN

Yemen's Houthis say they fired missile at Saudi Aramco site

Aljazeera, 4th March, 2021

Houthi rebels said they fired a missile at an oil facility owned by Saudi Aramco in the Red Sea city of Jeddah – the latest in a series of cross-border missile and drone strikes the Yemeni group has claimed against the kingdom. There was no immediate confirmation of Thursday's

attack by the oil giant or the kingdom's authorities. Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree on Twitter claimed the rebels hit an Aramco facility in Jeddah with a Quds-2 missile at dawn on Thursday in retaliation for a six-year military campaign led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/4/yemens-houthis-say-they-fired-missile-at-saudi-aramco-site-2>

Saudi-led coalition launches air raids on Yemen's Sanaa

Aljazeera, 7th March, 2021

The Saudi-led military coalition battling Yemen's Houthi movement has said it conducted air raids on Houthi military targets in Sanaa and other regions after the group launched armed drones towards Saudi Arabia. "The military operation targets Houthi military capabilities in Sanaa and a number of other provinces," the coalition said in a statement carried by Saudi state media on Sunday. Sources told Al Jazeera the coalition air raids "targeted Houthi military sites in the capital, Sanaa", including the al-Seyana base.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/7/saudi-arabia-launches-raids-on-yemens-sanaa-after-houthi-strikes>